WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THE WORLD OF ART

SELF PORTRAIT BY WILLIAM M. CHASE.
Exhibition of "The Ten," Knoedler Galleries.

ALL of the members of the organization known as "The Ten," the oldest living "group" exhibitors in America, are represented in the annual exhibition in the Knoedler Galleries, which is a consummation that has not been invariable in the long history of the group.

"The Ten," as must be annually explained, are impressionists who once banded together in a sort of protest against the Academy. They were the "protest" of a generation ago, and as far as the protest concerns ideals it must be allowed that they won the point long since. There is nothing in what "The Ten" produce that would be now considered offensive at the Academy. In fact, Mr. Weir, who is one of the chief factors in "The Ten," is president of the Academy. Mr. Chase and Mr. Hassam are to be counted on as regulars in the academical shows, and Mr. Tarbell, Mr. Simmons and the others would also be more than welcome on Fifty-seventh street.

"YOUNG WOMEN STUDYING," BY EDMUND C. TARBELL.
Exhibition of "The Ten," Knoedler Galleries.

As the idea that "The Ten" still represent a protest lingers in the public mind the effort is annually necessary to offset the impression. Asked why "The Ten" continue to exhibit, aloof from the Academy where these artists in principle now rightfully belong, the members explain that it is chiefly a question of hanging; that at the Academy they are crowded into uncongenial relationships with other painters, and that the work needs air and space around it to show to advantage.

On such grounds, of course, the refusal of Mr. Tarbell and Mr. Benson to send to our Academies may be understood, for every artist desires to be hung effectively. But as to difference in ideals, these artists no longer mention it.

In France there is seldom an occasion upon which to speak of Impressionism as a "Cause." It was a cause. It is, alas, ancient history. At present people of intelligence do not worry about it. Impressionism is a fixed, settled, accepted quantity, as far as the intelligent are concerned. A new "cause" occupies the thinkers, who contend for and against the offerings of the young "modernists," and the uncertainty as to how much the young people may extend their "cause" into the future has as much to do with compelling thinkers to think about it as any other factor. Certainty about an art movement stops thought.

The fact that impressionism has its honorable past, however, calls attention to the comparative smallness of the actual art world and to the slowness with which art ideas are accepted by the general public. However much impressionists may be said to have been accepted by the important few whose good opinion is worth having, it would be idle to contend that the average citizen cares for impressionistic work or even knows what it is. When we recall that impressionism is already out of date as a subject for conversation between the well informed it gives one a startling sense of the separation between art and the people, to realize that the community has not even yet arrived at the ideals of forty years ago.

How to bring art and the people into closer union is the problem of those who have the sociologic interest in art. It is a problem that gains in difficulty with the exigencies of modern life, a life that is discarding idealistic expression in favor of the supposed exactitudes of science. Just how far it is possible is a question, and just how successful other communities have been in the past is also a question.

We know that communal interest must be the backbone of all national art. The Greeks, we believe, had it completely, yet we are not too sure of the attitude of their common people toward the arts. France, which is our modern Greece, certainly has a considerable populace that is as capable of atrocities of taste as citizens of less enlightened lands.

The Greeks may not have been perfection, sociologically, but they still hold the first place, for their art proves it. The present France has excelled all contemporaries in public aptitude for art, because its art proves it. Civilization is proved by art. It is a disagreeable fact to have to face, that were the question put to the vote in the United States the preponderant millions would admit that their taste still clings to literal reproduction in the arts, and that interpretive arts are not even looked at, much less appreciated.

So wide a breach as forty years between "advanced" artists and a lagging public is intolerable. A complete rapport may not be possible, but at least the two poles should be brought within hailing distance of each other.

In regard to "The Ten" it was pointed out last year that the time had come for critics to deal gently with these hardy survivors from another period. Twelve inexorable months have passed away, and the sum total of inexorable years is one greater. The qualities of the artists who compose the group remain as distinct as ever, although naturally the vigor of thought is not as keen as it was once. Vigor is not everything in the intellectual life, but it is the great characteristic of fighters, and since no one fights for impressionism vigor drops by the way. In general it may be said of all of them as a group that color has lingered with them more than drawing.

Mr. Chase and Mr. Weir are the two who dominate the exhibition, and they are the two of these artists who seem to wear best. Mr. Chase sends a big self portrait and again a fish picture. The portrait is a big one, already owned by one of the Western museums, and has much lively characteristic painting in it.

Mr. Chase stands before a big canvas with which he has already been tussling, for his painting jacket has worked up over his shirtsleeves nearly to the elbow, and there is a table with some painting material upon it and a background with a suggestion of studio picturesqueness, flooded with light. The tinned tubes of paint, the turpentine bottles, the aforesaid rumpled shirtsleeves and all the rest of the still life have been put in with vivacity and in pleasant color. The fish picture has many of the attributes of Mr. Chase's best fish pictures. The slippery wateriness of the fish is as well rendered as ever and the color as realistic as usual. The flock of little high lights on the fish scales, however, are just so many dabs of white paint, and do not shimmer as such high lights should.

Mr. Weir sends two figure studies and a landscape, the latter being his important contribution. This landscape has been painted with Mr. Weir's familiar palette, the colors restricted but harmonious and pearly in tone. The two trees in it extend upward into the sky with lines that are both unexpected and graceful. The two figure studies are unambitious paintings that depend almost entirely on color. The artist has depended so much on color that he has not troubled to cover up the angularity of the lines upon which he "blocked" the figures in. The admirers of the works will have to shut their eyes at the amateurishness of the drawing.

"The Young Woman Studying," by Mr. Tarbell, is amazingly hard in manner, and totally lacking in enthusiasm. The room in which the young woman studies is a nice room in the style of those so heartily recommended by ladies' magazines, but that is the highest praise one may give it. Mr. Benson's "Interior" is not so hard in style, but as a theme for a grown man to paint, his subject is about as thin as has ever been seen. Mr. Dewing's "Artist" is also a sad affair to contemplate; color unpleasant, drawing feeble and nothing to speak of in the way of composition.

But hold! I promised to give this show a gentle writeup, and for the moment I was forgetting! To continue: Joseph De Camp is represented by one canvas, a decorously drawn portrait of Charles Sprague. Edward Simmons, an infrequent exhibitor, sends two aspects of femininity; one, that we reproduce, laughs and shows her pearly teeth and is swathed in white furs; she looks not unlike one of Harrison Fisher's magazine covers. The other is in less buoyant mood, and looks at her face sadly in a mirror; and indeed she has good cause to worry over her looks. Mr. Hassam sends a view of Naples, a marine, a view of the New York skyline, and a still life of apples painted somewhat in the manner of Cezanne. Mr. Metcalf and Mr. Reid contribute four works each, characteristic landscape and figure pieces.

"L'INSOUCIANTE."
BY EDWARD SIMMONS.
Exhibition of "The Ten," Knoedler Galleries.

PORTRAIT OF COUNT VON BERNSTORFF, BY WILHELM FUNK.
On recent exhibition in Reinhardt Galleries.

"OLD SENTINEL OF THE FARM," BY J. ALDEN WEIR.
Exhibition of "The Ten," Knoedler Galleries.

The Chinese exhibition now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the screens by Koyetru in the Arden Galleries on Fifth avenue are both for advanced students. In neither exhibition is there anything to attract the frivolous. Both hint at a growing exactness in our Oriental studies and at the increased audience we now have that is willing to face difficult problems.

"Koyetru was born in 1556 and died in Kioto in 1637. He created one of Japan's most original schools and is rated as one of the greatest masters of any race."

With such an Oriental reputation it might be assumed in advance that Koyetru's art would be simple, subtle and of the sort to easily escape the attention of the careless Westerner; and of such the screens in the Arden Galleries prove to be. Most of the Koyetru screens now shown are so sober and so Japanese that they almost repel examination, but fortunately one of them is of the very great order that speaks in the universal language to all the world, and once this screen is admired, suddenly one finds one has the clue also to the other more difficult works of art.

This ingratiating screen is a small affair with a background of ancient gold, and below the forceful, wonderful lines of ocean waves, painted in white. These lines have the majesty and simplicity of great art. Tossing along at intervals over the waves are Japanese fans painted with almost mechanical realism. There is nothing more to the design—the rolling sea and the tossing fans, that is all. The placement of the fans is so agreeable that few Western artists would question the design. It is so satisfactory that to an artist it makes the effect of plausibility.

The other screens, it can then be seen, are made up of mere placements of fans, for the most part. Fans are geometrically, or perhaps musically, placed here and there over the gold backgrounds. The fans often have intricate paintings of figures or landscapes upon them, but the great arrangement is a pattern made up of fans. It can be understood that the art of Koyetru is in consequence peculiarly Japanese, and very difficult for us. As for understanding it, we Westerners cannot, for we haven't it in our blood. The sincerity and the religious intensity, can, however, be felt and respected.

There will be more to be said of the Koyetru hereafter, for it can be seen that he relates to the problems now troubling modern artists.